



## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Natterjack  
Toad article
- Ash Tag  
Mobile Phone  
App
- Follow Us!  
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Facebook and  
Twitter Page
- What's On

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The next biodiversity network meeting for North East Wales will be held on **April 16<sup>th</sup> 2013 at 10:30a.m.** in the Trunk Road Agencies Office, North Wales Traffic Management Centre, Ffordd Sam Parri, Conwy, LL32 8RT

## AUTUMN/WINTER 2012

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### What is a fungus, and the difference between a mushroom and a

### toadstool?



A fungus is neither a plant nor an animal. It is superficially similar to a plant, but it has no chlorophyll and cannot make its own food like a plant. Instead they get their food by absorbing nutrients from their surroundings aiding with decomposition. The fungi Kingdom includes mushrooms, rusts, smuts, puffballs, truffles, morels, moulds, yeasts, and thousands of other organisms and microorganisms. They range from microscopic single-celled organisms, such as yeast, to gigantic multicellular organisms such as the recognizable giant puffball. Although they are abundant throughout the world, most fungi are inconspicuous because of their small size and their cryptic lifestyles in soil or on dead matter. They may become noticeable when

fruiting, either as mushrooms or moulds, but are present in the soil or litter as tiny mycelia which are the thin root-like vegetative part of a fungus. The fruiting body is what we would all generally recognize as a fungus. The largest organism on the planet is likely to be a fungus with the one genetically distinct individual being found over 965 hectares of soil in Oregon's Blue Mountains. This autumn has been good for observing, identifying and recording our local fungi either individually or as part of a fungal foray lead by one of our local experts. Fungal forays are extremely popular with all ages and abilities. The experienced recorders relishing in the task of keying out organisms which at first seem impossible to distinguish and the endless energy of children who enjoy rushing around in the outdoors hunting out even the most hidden of fungi. On every fungi walk I have ever been on someone has asked the question "what is the difference between a mushroom and a toadstool?" Most scientific sources indicate that there is no difference.

People tend to refer to toadstools as the toxic (poisonous) ones and mushrooms as the edible ones. However, some mushrooms are poisonous too. A number of non-scientific dictionaries state that a toadstool is an inedible mushroom. So, the safest answer is "*There is no scientific difference, but people refer to toadstools as the inedible or toxic ones.*" See fungi at, Chirk Castle, Old church yards and cemeteries, Marford Quarry, Ancient woodlands such as Coed Trelyniau, The Great Orme and other rich grassland sites.



### Ash Tag! - The Ash Dieback smartphone app

Ash Dieback is caused by the fungus *Chalara Fraxinea* and was found recently for the first time in the UK. The app, 'Ash Tag' has been developed so that smartphone owners report suspected cases of infection. The app allows the users to report viewings of the disease, photos and it's location. These will then be referred onto the Forestry Commission. It also provides users with useful information Ash Dieback is caused by the fungus

*Chalara fraxinea* and was found recently for the first time in the UK. The app 'Ash Tag' has been developed so that smartphone owners can report suspected cases of infection. The app allows the users to report viewings of the disease photos and its location. These will then be referred onto the Forestry Commission. It also provides users with useful information on how to identify the disease such as looking for lesions on their

bark, dieback of leaves at the tree's crown, and leaves turning brown. This is an attempt to help prevent the disease spreading across the country's 80 million ash trees as it has already affected millions of trees across the continent and therefore led to a ban on imports. The app is easy to download and use, simply visit your app store and search for 'Ash Tag'!



# Denbighshire's natterjack toads:

## Keeping their Heads above Water



*Adult Natterjack toad found on a night survey at Gronant Dunes*

*"The small populations of this charismatic amphibian still need our help to ensure their long-term survival in North Wales."*

We all know that 2012 has been one of the wettest years on record. The weather has been disastrous for many species, with rainfall higher and temperatures lower than the long-term average for most of the spring and summer.

Heavy rain in June was particularly ill-timed for birds trying to rear their young, with nests flooded and insect food hard to find.

But there's one species in Denbighshire which has really benefitted from the rain: the natterjack toad. This species is distinguished from the common toad by a yellow stripe down its back and its smaller size. Adult natterjack toads are nocturnal and the males have a loud rasping call that can be heard all over the dunes. It breeds in shallow pools in sand dunes at Gronant Dunes LNR near Prestatyn. In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the natterjack sadly became extinct in North Wales, but thanks to a re-introduction programme now survives in Denbighshire and Flintshire.

The heavy rain has meant that the natterjacks' breeding ponds have stayed full for longer, so tadpoles have had time to develop into toadlets before the ponds dry up. The conditions were

so favourable that the toads spawned twice during the breeding season and tiny toadlets were observed emerging from the ponds in both May and August. This is in real contrast with last year when the lack of rain meant breeding ponds dried up before many tadpoles had chance to fully develop.



*Tiny toadlet that had just emerged from its breeding pond*

The small populations of this charismatic amphibian still need our help to ensure their long-term survival in North Wales. We contribute to an annual monitoring programme and undertake habitat management works on the site to keep the conditions favourable for natterjack toads. If you would like to find out more contact Lizzy Webster for Denbighshire or Sarah Slater for Flintshire.

## The first in 40 years

*A happy male Pine Marten*



The first known carcass of a road casualty Pine Marten has been found near Newtown, Powys. The young male carcass was found by local resident Olly Amy, on the roadside close to the village of Aberhafesp near Newtown. DNA analysis has now been carried out at

Waterford Institute of Technology which has provided evidence that this is a Pine Marten native to the British Isles. The VWT have recently carried out a number of hunts for Pine Marten scats, deployed remote cameras and set up baited hair tubes but

despite all the hard work by teams of volunteers, nothing was found. They have also received over 300 credible reports of sightings of pine martens in Wales over the past 20 years however there hasn't been any unequivocal evidence – until now.



## Orchard recovery project



**Freshly picked or fallen apples are a delicious**

Once a common sight in the British countryside orchards have now become rare and have been listed as a priority habitat for conservation. Traditional orchards are assumed to be over 60 years old and have often grown on the same area of land for hundreds of years; they are planted at low densities and avoid the use of pesticides and herbicides in favour of grazing and natural pest control. The orchards traditionally associated with North East Wales are dominated by apple varieties and range from formal orchards to a

selection of trees distributed evenly throughout hedgerows. In addition to apples, pears and plums, damsons, walnuts and cherries also have significance in North East Wales.

An orchard can provide a refuge for wildlife in our landscape. The combination of fruit trees and grassland that have often been undisturbed for hundreds of years and avoided any agricultural improvement results in an environment that is immensely rich in biodiversity.

In Autumn 2011 Flintshire County Council and the North Wales Wildlife Trust were successful in a bid to the Welsh government for funding to plant and restore orchards in North East Wales. Over the winter they completed the majority of the project by identifying new orchard

sites and surveying and restoring existing orchards working with Denbighshire and Wrexham County Councils on public and private land. Fifty sites were planted up with 1000 trees and this winter the work will continue with trees that were lost being replaced and any remaining trees being planted at additional sites.



**Heritage varieties have been used for the project**

If you are interested in the project there is a free booklet available. To obtain a copy or for more information please contact Sarah Slater.

## Sand Lizards need your help

Sand lizards are the rarest reptile in the UK and are a European protected species. Once nearly extinct, these native lizards have been bred in captivity and successful breeding programmes have been completed across the UK resulting in a great increase in their population. However, the fast-

spreading, climbing vine known as clematis has now begun to smother the sand dunes which the sand lizards lay their eggs in during the summer months. If this plant is left untouched, sand lizards will be lost for a location to live and breed and this is why your help is needed

**On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December** we are looking for volunteers to help remove and dispose of this clematis. If you would like to help at any point over the weekend please email us with your name and what days you would be able to attend.



Email:  
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**or**  
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Biodiversity Network  
North East Wales  
Rhwydwaith Bioamrywiaeth  
Gogledd Dwyrain Cymru

## Contact Us

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## Follow Us!

Like our North East Wales Biodiversity Network page on Facebook to be updated on biodiversity action in Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. Regular posts are uploaded to the site informing you of exciting news, events, photos and projects in the area. It is a quick, simple and free way to discover what biodiversity activities are taking place and what you could be involved with in your county.

We also have a Twitter account which similarly to Facebook, updates you with regular tweets on interesting Bionet news, successes and events.

So follow us now at : Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/NEWBionet](http://www.facebook.com/NEWBionet)

Twitter: @newbionet



### Follow us!

Facebook: North East Wales  
Biodiversity Network

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## What's Happening? Events & Surveys

### 17th November 2012

North Wales Wildlife Trust  
Christmas Fair, At Old School,  
Tremeirchion 10:30-12:30

### 23rd November 2012

The Lacey Lecture: A tour  
through the National Botanic  
Garden of Wales, 7.30pm Main  
Arts lecture theatre, University of  
Bangor, Bangor

Tickets NWWT 01248 351541

### 1st December 2012

Bird watch day at Aberogwen,  
Spinnies reserve 11.00-3.00

### 14th December 2012

North Wales Wildlife Trust  
Christmas get-together, 7:30p.m.  
St. Cyngar's Church Hall,  
Llangefni

We have included a mixture  
of volunteering  
opportunities, training  
courses and events so  
everyone can get involved  
and learn more about  
biodiversity and the  
countryside in North  
East Wales!

For more activities in your  
area please visit your local  
authority's website and see  
the countryside events  
booklets or  
[www.cofnod.org.uk](http://www.cofnod.org.uk) for a  
myriad of different things to  
do!



**Winter Thrush Survey:** Help  
the British trust for ornithology  
in their latest survey—details at  
<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/winter-thrushes>

**Saturday wildlife walks at the  
RSPB Conwy, 11 am - 1 pm**  
Saturday 3 November and  
every Saturday until the end of  
December 2012

Guided walk about our birds  
and wildlife. RSPB Conwy na-  
ture reserve  
LL31 9XZ

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<http://www.rspb.org.uk/events/index.aspx>